

Message Text

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TAGS: ELAB EG US
SUBJECT: CHAIKIN-LEE VISIT TO EGYPT -- FUTURE
- LABOR PROGRAMMING

REF: (A) STATE 23652

SUMMARY: WE HAVE LONG FAVORED ASSISTANCE TO EGYPTIAN
LABOR AND ARE PLEASED WITH POSITIVE OUTCOME OF CHAIKIN-
LEE VISIT. AS RELATIONSHIP DEVELOPS, BELIEVE WE MUST
KEEP IN MIND THAT LABOR PROGRAMMING SHOULD GO BEYOND
COSMETICS, TO STRENGTHEN U.S.-EGYPTIAN LABOR DIALOGUE
AND IMPROVE EGYPTIAN-LABOR EXPERTISE. WE SHOULD ALSO
PROCEED SLOWLY SO THAT IF VICISSITUDES OF PEACE PROCESS
DAMPEN AFL-CIO ATTITUDE TOWARDS EGYPT, WE ARE NOT EX-
POSED TO POINT WHERE OUR OVERALL RELATIONS ARE DAMAGED.
MISSION SUPPORTS ASSISTANCE TO WORKERS' UNIVERSITY AND
EFL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL VISIT TO U.S. IN OUR VIEW LATTER
PROGRAM WOULD BE MOST EFFECTIVE IF CONDUCTED OVER TIME
AND IN SMALL GROUPS TO ALLOW FOR ADEQUATE INTERPRETER
SUPPORT, PERSONAL ATTENTION TO PARTICIPANTS, REAL
DIALOGUE WITH U.S. COUNTERPARTS AND CLOSE LOOK AT AREAS
OF SPECIFIC INTEREST. HOWEVER, IF AFL-CIO FEELS COM-
MITTED TO VISIT BY EXECUTIVE COUNCIL EN MASSE, WE WOULD
CONCUR. WE MENTION BELOW OTHER POSSIBILITIES EGYPTIANS
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HAVE RAISED WITH US AND BELIEVE IT USEFUL TO INCLUDE
EGYPTIAN LABOR IN REGULAR TRAINING PROGRAMS CONDUCTED
BY DOL WITH AFL-CIO ASSISTANCE AND FINANCED THROUGH AID.
ASSISTANCE TO EGYPTIAN LABOR SHOULD IN FUTURE BE EX-
AMINED CAREFULLY WITH EMBASSY/AID, WHICH MUST JUSTIFY
USE OF FUNDS, BEFORE COMMITMENTS ARE MADE. END SUMMARY.

1. AS DEPT AWARE, WE HAVE LONG FAVORED ASSISTANCE TO EGYPTIAN LABOR. AFL/CIO INVITATION TO SAAD AHMED TO VISIT U.S. WAS WELCOME DEVELOPMENT AND WE ARE ESPECIALLY APPRECIATIVE OF EFFORT MADE BY AFL/CIO PRESIDENT GEORGE MEANY TO EXTEND HOSPITALITY. SUBSEQUENT LEE-CHAIKIN VISIT WAS USEFUL FOLLOW-UP AND THEY DISCUSSED WITH EGYPTIAN LABOR LEADERS FUTURE LABOR PROGRAMMING POSSI-

BILITIES FOR EGYPT. BELIEVE EFFORT SHOULD BE MADE TO PROCEED, ALBEIT CAREFULLY, IN THIS FIELD.

2. AS WE SEE IT, ANY LABOR PROGRAMMING THAT WE ENGAGE IN SHOULD BE AIMED AT (A) STRENGTHENING DIALOGUE BETWEEN AMERICAN AND EGYPTIAN LABOR AND (B) IMPROVING EGYPTIAN LABOR EXPERTISE IN VARIOUS FIELDS. IT SHOULD BE CONSISTENT WITH OVERALL COUNTRY OBJECTIVES AND PRIORITIES AND ACTIVITIES SIMPLY FOR THE SAKE OF COSMETICS SHOULD BE AVOIDED. WE ARE MINDFUL, MOREOVER, THAT WELCOME AFL/CIO CHANGE OF ATTITUDE TOWARD EGYPT RESULTS LARGELY FROM SADAT'S PEACE INITIATIVE. THE VICISSITUDES OF THAT PEACE EFFORT ARE ALREADY BEING FELT AND EGYPTIAN OFFICIAL AND PUBLIC CRITICISM OF ISRAEL REMAINS SHARP. WE ARE UNABLE TO ASSESS FROM HERE HOW THIS MAY AFFECT FUTURE AFL/CIO ATTITUDES TOWARD EGYPT AND BELIEVE IT DESIRABLE THEREFORE INITIALLY TO PROCEED SLOWLY SO THAT, IF AFL/CIO ATTITUDES TOWARD EGYPT BECOME LESS POSITIVE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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BECAUSE OF ME PEACE PROCESS DISAGREEMENTS WITH ISRAEL, WE ARE NOT EXPOSED TO A POINT WHERE OUR OVERALL RELATIONS WITH EGYPT WILL BE HURT.

3. MAIN PROGRAM POSSIBILITIES DISCUSSED WITH EGYPTIAN LABOR REPRESENTATIVES BY CHAIKIN AND LEE DURING THEIR VISIT HERE AS FOLLOWS: (A) ASSISTANCE TO WORKERS' UNIVERSITY WITH EARLY VISIT BY AALC DIRECTOR O'FARRELL TO EGYPT TO EXAMINE MODALITIES OF SUCH ASSISTANCE; (B) ONE-MONTH VISIT BY 25 TOP EGYPTIAN LABOR LEADERS TO U.S. JUNE/JULY 1978; AND (C) COOPERATION IN VOCATIONAL TRAINING ACTIVITIES FOR TRANSPORT AND AGRICULTURAL WORKERS. CHAIKIN AND LEE ASSUMED THESE PROGRAMS WOULD BE FUNDED BY AID. THEY TOLD US THAT THEY VIEWED THE PROPOSED PROGRAMS (A) AND (B) AS HIGHLY USEFUL TO INTERESTS OF BOTH U.S. AND EGYPTIAN LABOR, AND STRONGLY URGED MISSION TO SUPPORT THEM. THEY WERE NONCOMMITTAL CONCERNING PROGRAM (C).

4. THE TYPE OF ASSISTANCE UNDER PROGRAM (A), AS DISCUSSED WITH AFL/CIO DURING VISIT OF SAAD AHMED TO U.S. IN DECEMBER 1977, INCLUDED SUPPLY OF AUDIO-VISUAL AND

SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION EQUIPMENT, CLOSED CIRCUIT TV, AND MEANS OF TRANSPORTATION. ASSISTANCE COULD BE WELL PUBLICIZED AND COULD PROVIDE CONTINUING EVIDENCE OF AMERICAN INTEREST IN THE WELFARE AND ADVANCEMENT OF EGYPTIAN WORKERS. WORKERS' "UNIVERSITY", WHICH IS STILL UNDER CONSTRUCTION, WILL CONSOLIDATE THE ACTIVITIES OF THE SIX INSTITUTES OF THE EFL'S SELF-FUNDED WORKERS' EDUCATION ASSOCIATION. THE EFL'S GOAL IS TO DEVELOP A CADRE OF ELECTED AND ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICIALS EXPERT IN ALL AREAS NORMALLY OF INTEREST TO LABOR UNIONS AND, THROUGH THEM, TO MAKE THE OFTEN ILLITERATE EGYPTIAN WORKERS MORE ABLE TO FUNCTION IN A MODERN CONTEXT. WE

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HAVE NOT YET EVALUATED THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE UNIVERSITY'S GOALS AND METHODS AND CANNOT THEREFORE COMMENT ON ITS LONG-TERM USEFULNESS TO EGYPTIAN DEVELOPMENT. NEVERTHELESS, THE EFL WILL NO DOUBT PRESS AHEAD WITH THIS SO-FAR SELF-FUNDED ACTIVITY AND ITS REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE IS BOTH RELATIVELY MODEST AND CONSISTENT WITH ITS OWN PLANS.

5. WE ARE SOMEWHAT MORE DOUBTFUL ABOUT THE UTILITY OF PROGRAM (B) IN FORM SUGGESTED BY EGYPTIANS. THE IDEA OF EXPOSING THE TOP LEADERSHIP OF EGYPTIAN LABOR TO AMERICAN LABOR LEADERSHIP IS CLEARLY DESIRABLE, BUT SENDING AT SAME TIME 25 SUCH EGYPTIAN LABOR LEADERS, MANY OF WHOM DO NOT SPEAK ENGLISH AND WOULD NEED INTERPRETERS, HARDLY SEEMS PROMISING. WE HAVE EXPERIENCED TOO OFTEN GROUPS OF THIS SORT. THEY ARE GIVEN RECEPTIONS, BUT THEIR LESS ARTICULATE MEMBERS AND ESPECIALLY THOSE WHO KNOW NO ENGLISH, TEND AFTER A TIME TO BE IGNORED BY HOSTS, REGARDLESS OF HOW WELL MEANING THE LATTER MAY BE.

IN OUR JUDGMENT, IT WOULD BE BETTER TO SEND TOP EGYPTIAN LABOR LEADERS TO U.S. IN SMALLER GROUPS SO THAT THEY CAN ENGAGE IN REAL DIALOGUE WITH AMERICAN COUNTERPARTS. THIS WILL ALSO OFFER GREATER PROSPECTS OF GIVING PERSONAL ATTENTION TO EGYPTIAN PARTICIPANTS AND PROVIDING THEM WITH A CHANCE FOR A CLOSE LOOK AT THE AREAS OF IMMEDIATE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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INTEREST TO THEM. OTHERWISE, WE FEAR, SUCH A LARGE GROUP WILL SIMPLY BE HERDED ABOUT, WHICH TENDS TO BE COUNTERPRODUCTIVE. WE RECOGNIZE THAT EGYPTIANS RAISED INITIAL IDEA THAT GROUP GO, BUT BELIEVE WE SHOULD BE ABLE TO EXPLAIN TO THEM WHY THIS IS NOT THE BEST WAY TO HANDLE THE MATTER AND THAT SMALLER GROUPS WILL BENEFIT THEM MORE. HOWEVER, DESPITE OUR VIEW THAT LARGE GROUP IS NOT THE BEST USE OF AMERICAN RESOURCES, IF CHAIKIN-LEE CONSIDER THEMSELVES IRREVOCABLY COMMITTED TO VISIT BY ENTIRE GROUP AT ONE TIME, WE WOULD RELUCTANTLY CONCUR.

6. RE PROGRAM PROPOSAL (C), THE GENERAL UNION OF LAND TRANSPORT WORKERS FORMALLY HAS REQUESTED USAID ASSISTANCE IN ESTABLISHING A VOCATIONAL TRAINING CENTER IN CAIRO TO TRAIN AND UPGRADE SKILLED AND SEMI-SKILLED WORKERS FOR CITY AND INTER-CITY BUS AND TRUCK COMPANIES. THE NEED FOR SKILLED TRANSPORTATION WORKERS IS VALID AND IDENTIFIABLE. THE GENERAL NILE COMPANY, ONE OF THE LARGER HEAVY VEHICLE MAINTENANCE FIRMS, HAS AN IMMEDIATE REQUIREMENT FOR 8,800 SKILLED MAINTENANCE PERSONNEL. FURTHERMORE, REPRESENTATIVES OF THE WARD BUS COMPANY THROUGH WHICH THE GOE IS IMPORTING 1600 BUSES UNDER THE CIP PROGRAM HAVE IDENTIFIED A CRITICAL NEED FOR SKILLED MAINTENANCE PERSONNEL. USAID CURRENTLY IS CONDUCTING AN INTENSIVE STUDY OF THE PROPOSAL WITH HOPES OF PREPARING A BID IN MARCH 1978. EGYPTIAN LABOR ALSO IS AWARE OF THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS ACTIVITY, AND IS EAGER FOR HELP IT BELIEVES USG AND AFL/CIO CAN GIVE.

7. ALSO IN REFERENCE TO PROPOSED PROGRAM (C), USAID HAS BEEN APPROACHED BY THE FARM WORKERS UNIONS FOR TRAINING OF LANDLESS LABORERS IN VARIOUS RUDIMENTARY ASPECTS OF FARM MECHANIZATION, SINCE IT IS THIS GROUP WHO WILL LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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BE AFFECTED MOST BY INCREASED MECHANIZATION LIKELY TO OCCUR IN EGYPT. PRESENT PLAN CALLS FOR TWO CENTERS, CAPACITY 50 PERSONS, TO TRAIN IN OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

OF BASIC FARM MACHINERY. AID ASSISTANCE WAS SOLICITED IN PLANNING AND DESIGN, CURRICULUM AND TRAINING MATERIALS DEVELOPMENT.

8. ALTHOUGH NOT MENTIONED DURING CHAIKIN AND LEE VISIT, ANOTHER PROGRAM POSSIBILITY HAS BEEN PROPOSED TO USAID BY OFFICIALS OF THE COMMERCIAL WORKERS UNION WHO HAVE REQUESTED ASSISTANCE TO IMPROVE THEIR TRAINING PROGRAMS BY INTRODUCING MODERN CONCEPTS, TECHNOLOGY AND TECHNIQUES OF WESTERN COMMERCIAL PRACTICES.

9. LABOR FIELD IS UNDOUBTEDLY OPEN TO OTHER POTENTIALLY USEFUL PROGRAMS CONSISTENT WITH OVERALL COUNTRY OBJECTIVES. FOR EXAMPLE, WE BELIEVE IT WOULD BE USEFUL TO INCLUDE EGYPTIAN TRADE UNIONISTS IN REGULAR TRAINING PROGRAMS CONDUCTED BY DEPT OF LABOR WITH AFL/CIO ASSISTANCE AND FINANCED THROUGH AID. THERE ARE DOUBTLESS OTHER POSSIBILITIES WHICH MIGHT BE EXPLORED.

10. WE LOOK FORWARD TO O'FARRELL'S UPCOMING VISIT IN MARCH AND CONCERNED EMBASSY/AID OFFICIALS WILL WELCOME OPPORTUNITY DISCUSS WITH HIM IN DEPTH WHAT OTHER HELP MIGHT BE GIVEN TO EGYPTIAN LABOR. WE WISH TO STRESS, HOWEVER, THAT ANY FUTURE LABOR PROGRAMMING WILL HAVE TO BE VETTED CAREFULLY BY EMBASSY/USAID, WHICH MUST JUSTIFY TO THE CONGRESS THE EXPENDITURE OF AID FUNDS AND ENSURE THAT THE PROGRAMS ARE OPTIMALLY CONCEIVED. EILTS

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